

## 4.1 UNDERSTAND THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

### What to Know

The purpose of all interviews is to find the best person for the job. However, interviews can be conducted in different ways. Interviewing is a two-way process.

### The Interview

1. An individual interview is like an in-depth conversation. The interviewer may be the person who will be your supervisor. Hiring decisions are often made based on this type of interview. Count on discussing your skills, experience, training and how they all relate to the duties and opportunities of the job. There will usually be time for you to ask questions. You must sell your:
  - skills;
  - interest; and
  - enthusiasm;
  - understanding of the job.
2. A panel interview is frequently used by government agencies and companies filling a professional or managerial position. Usually three or more people sit on the board, and all candidates are asked the same questions. A selection board interview usually involves more structured questions than an individual interview, and generally does not include a discussion of salary and benefits. The process can be stressful because you have to answer questions from several people. Be sure to make eye contact with everyone on the panel. When answering a question, it is especially important to make eye contact with the person who asked the question.
3. The phone interview is another strategy that some employers use. In this situation, the hiring manager or selection committee interviews job applicants over the telephone as a screening technique. Phone interviews are used to make a first round of cuts to the applicant pool. If the employers are interested in candidates they will then schedule face-to-face interviews. Remember, as soon as you pick up the telephone you are making an impression. Be sure to review the telephone tips in section 2.
4. Stress interviews are another format that some employers, frequently law enforcement organizations, use to evaluate candidates. The interviewers' job is to intimidate you. They want to find out how you handle stress. The rationale behind the tactic is that if you're unable or unwilling to handle conditions of imposed stress, it's unlikely you'll have the ability to maintain your composure under conditions of real stress. In response to this tactic, it's important that you don't react defensively, but instead remain calm and respond appropriately.
5. The observational interview format may be used by an employer. In this format, the candidate is asked to demonstrate his/her abilities with some of the skills required for the position. This may include giving a demonstration of public speaking ability, answering telephone calls, or operating a piece of equipment while the interviewer observes your performance.

## Interview Stages

Most interviews break into four stages. The better you understand each stage, and what is expected of you, the better your chances of being selected.

### 1. Introductory Stage

The interviewer forms an initial impression that can contribute to acceptance or rejection. The decision to hire is not made at this stage, but it begins here. Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression!

### 2. Employer Questions

The interviewer tries to determine how well your attitude and skills fit with the company image and work culture. The interviewer is trying to match your specific skills and abilities to the job.

### 3. Applicant Questions

The interviewer is trying to determine your level of interest in the job and your degree of knowledge about the company. This is the time to clear up uncertainties.

### 4. Closing Stage

The interviewer will draw the session to a close. If you are sure you want the job, make your intentions clear at this time.

Following are some examples of how you may conclude an interview. As you read the examples, remember, assertive is okay, aggressive is not!

*“Mr. Brown, is there anything that I didn’t cover that you’d like me to?”*

*“After meeting with you, I’m even more convinced that I’d be a good fit for this position.”*

*“Ms. Jones, when do you plan to fill the position?”*

They will usually tell you. If so, you can politely suggest you will call that day.

*“If you don’t mind, I’d like to call you on that day to find out what my status is.”*

*“Would it be OK if I called then to check the status of the position?”*

Usually the hiring authorities for the position will confer before anyone is offered a job. So, do not expect a decision to be made about the position immediately.

## What to Do

Remember, interviews are about sharing information. Your responsibility is to focus the interview on a match between your skills, knowledge, and experience and the company’s needs.